

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06412 191304Z

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1217

S E C R E T BEIRUT 6412

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AEMR, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: MARONITE DISINCLINATION APPROVE USE OF BEIRUT AIRPORT FOR
EVACUATION AIRCRAFT

1. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN MARONITE APPROVAL FOR CONTINGENT
USE OF BEIRUT AIRPORT FOR EVACUATING PERSONNEL, ALTHOUGH MARONITE
LEADERS HAVE HAD THREE FULL DAYS TO GIVE US A POSITIVE DECISION.
LAME RESPONSE FROM ONE CONTACT ON OTHER SIDE HAS BEEN "WE DO NOT HAVE
A UNITED COMMAND AND CANNOT CONTROL ACTIONS OF ALL MARONITE
FACTIONS. " ONLY OKAY HAS COME FROM HEADQUARTERS COMPLEMENT
OF MARONITE EX-LEBANESE ARMY OFFICERS WHO, HOWEVER, ACKNOWLEDGE
THEY DO NOT RPT NOT SPEAK FOR KATAEB OR CHAMOUNISTS.

2. COMMENT. THIS RUNAROUND QUITE CLEARLY REPRESENTS A REFUSAL
ON THE PART OF THE TOP MARONITE LEADERSHIP TO GIVE US THE NEEDED
ASSURANCES. WHILE IT IS POSSIBLE THAT KATAEB-CHAMOUNIST LEADERSHIP
MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL ON INDIVIDUAL MARONITE UNIT SITUATED
ON THE MOUNTAIN SIDE ABOVE BEIRUT AIRPORT, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT
KATAEB AND CHAMOUNISTS HAVE REFRAINED FROM GIVING US ASSURANCES
THAT AT LEAST THEIR ORGANIZATIONS WOULD HOLD THEIR FIRE. MARONITES
WANT TO DO ALL THEY CAN TO HOLD AIRPORT HOSTAGE, AND THEY
OBVIOUSLY FEEL NO OBLIGATION TO DO US A FAVOR. ICRC PLANES
PRESUMABLY COME AND GO WITHOUT FORMAL MARONITE ASSURANCES, AND
"ON A WING AND A PRAYER."
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